

Message Text

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INFO DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

FICEURLANT

EUDAC STUTTGART GER

USMISSION NATO

USNMR SHAPE

USDEL MC NATO BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY BONN

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 34654

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, PFOR, PINT, FR

SUBJECT: SOCIALIST LEFT WING ON NATIONAL DEFENSE: VIEWS
OF JEAN-PIERRE CHEVENEMENT, SOCIALIST DEPUTY, MEMBER
AND FOUNDER OF C.E.R.E.S.

SUMMARY. DURING LUNCHEON MEETING WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS
ON 18 NOV 76, CHEVENEMENT DISCUSSED SOME OF HIS VIEWS
ON FRENCH NATIONAL DEFENSE,
FOCUSING ON HIS PERCEPTION OF THE THREAT, AND HOW THE
FRENCH ARMY SHOULD BE ORGANIZED AND MANNED. END
SUMMARY.

1. THE THREAT.

CHEVENEMENT FIRST BRIEFLY ACKNOWLEDGED THE EXISTENCE OF
THE SOVIET THREAT IN THE CENTRAL REGION; HE THEN
DISMISSED IT AS RELATIVELY UNCOMPELLING SINCE IT WOULD
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NOT, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, ACT DIRECTLY AGAINST

FRANCE -- FRANCE'S ALLIES WOULD BE FORCED TO REACT FIRST, GIVING FRANCE MORE LATITUDE IN DECISION-MAKING. HE RECALLED THAT GERMAN DECISION MAKERS AT THE OUTSET OF WWI FELT THEY WERE BEING DRAGGED INTO THE CONFLICT AGAINST THEIR BETTER JUDGMENT; CHEVENEMENT SAID FRANCE MUST AVOID A SIMILAR PLIGHT, AND MUST REMAIN IN CONTROL OF HER OWN DESTINY. QUESTIONED CLOSELY ABOUT HIS PERCEPTION THAT FRANCE WOULD NOT BE IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY INVOLVED BY SOVIET AGGRESSION IN THE CENTRAL REGION, CHEVENEMENT ADMITTED THAT FRENCH INTERESTS WOULD OF COURSE BE DEEPLY INVOLVED. HOWEVER, HE CHOSE NOT TO GRAPPLE WITH THE ISSUE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE INCREASING POSSIBILITY THERE MIGHT BE LITTLE TIME FOR EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING, BUT WAS NOT WILLING TO PURSUE THE PROBLEM FURTHER BECAUSE HE CONSIDERS THE FRENCH FORCES NOW IN GERMANY ARE TOO SMALL TO BE DECISIVE AGAINST A MAJOR SOVIET THRUST. CHEVENEMENT APPEARED MORE INTERESTED IN WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS THE RAPIDLY GROWING THREAT FROM THE SOUTH TO WHICH HE CONSIDERS INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION HAS THUS FAR BEEN GIVEN BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT.

2. ORGANIZATION AND MANNING OF THE FRENCH ARMY. CHEVENEMENT DISAGREED WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENT ATTEMPTS TO ERASE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN MANEUVER FORCES AND TERRITORIAL FORCES. HE CONSIDERS TERRITORIAL FORCES TO BE INDISPENSABLE, AND DISAGREES WITH THE IDEA THAT POORLY EQUIPPED MASSES OF SOLDIERS CAN BE MANEUVERED LIKE THE "BIG BATTALIONS" OF YESTERYEAR. HE CONSIDERS THAT THE TERRITORIAL FORCES, ARMED WITH MODERN ANTI-TANK MISSILES, CAN BE FULLY EFFECTIVE IN DEFENDING FRENCH SOIL. IN HIS VIEW, TRAINING NECESSARY TO REACH AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH CONSCRIPTION WITH THE PERIOD OF MANDATORY SERVICE DECREASED FROM THE CURRENT 12 MONTHS TO "SIX OR EIGHT MONTHS". ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED FOR A MOBILE MANEUVER FORCE, HE INDICATED THAT IT COULD BE CONSIDERABLY SMALLER THAN NOW EXISTS. ADMITTING THAT A SHORT PERIOD OF DRAFT SERVICE WOULD BE INADEQUATE TO ACHIEVE FULL EFFECTIVE-
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NESS IN THE MANEUVER FORCES, HE INDICATED HE READILY ACCEPTED THAT MANEUVER FORCES WOULD BE MANNED BY VOLUNTEERS FOR A CONSIDERABLY LONGER PERIOD OF SERVICE.

COMMENT: CHEVENEMENT'S VIEWS ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTING AT THE MOMENT BECAUSE THE SOCIALISTS ARE NOW IN THE PROCESS OF RENEGOTIATING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY DEFENSE ASPECTS OF

THE COMMON PROGRAM OF THE LEFT. IT WILL BE NOTED THAT
HIS VIEW CONCERNING THE LENGTH OF MANDATORY
SERVICE IS IDENTICAL WITH THAT RECENTLY EXPRESSED BY
FRANCOIS MITTERRAND.

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